* forthcoming at *Popular Communication** please do not circulate or cite without permission of the author*

Brandalism, Environmentalism and Culture Jamming: The Logic of Appropriation

Eleftheria J. Lekakis

Brandalism for the Environment

In late November 2015, while the launch for the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) was underway, another set of operations was happening in Paris. As part of the Brandalism project[i], volunteers replaced over six hundred six-sheet posters in bus stops around the French capital with unique artwork[ii]. This operation employed creative tactics in both its articulation and dissemination. The Brandalism project, acting in the name of resistance to corporate control, engaged in culture jamming[iii] as the subversion of advertising in public spaces. By engaging in acts of discursive and material disruptions during COP21, the group aimed to promote a critique of climate change by directly addressing the complicity of advertising. The intersection between culture jamming and environmental activism is explored in this paper through the case of the Brandalism COP21 action. Brandalism can be understood as a creative activism project which marries culture jamming with consumer politics and uses the logic of appropriation to address specific issues, such as, in this case, environmentalism at the wake of COP21.

In this paper, creative activism is theorized within the literature of the new politics of consumption and political consumerism, and illustrates how the latter intersects with environmental activism beyond the practice of commodity consumption. Political consumerism[iv] analyzes the transference of political values and acts in the realm of the market and explores participation in progressive political activism as individualized collective action (Stolle and Micheletti, 2015). This piece argues that the Brandalism project is a case of culture jamming which draws upon the logic of appropriation to connect a

critique of corporate culture to environmentalism, as well as challenge the dominance of advertising in public spaces. By gearing its actions towards advertising, the Brandalism project challenges critiques about the incorporation of culture jamming within consumer culture (Jordan, 2002; Heath and Potter, 2005; Harrebye, 2015). In the visual battlefields of public bus stops and later in the virtual channels of the internet, forms of discursive political consumerism lend themselves to resist and reuse the logic of appropriation. Culture jamming, in the case examined, appears to be a modality of creative activism which both asserts the power of consumer politics as well as contests the commercialization of social change.

The logic of appropriation includes ephemeral interventions in public spaces, disruption of the advertising as spectacle, tactical dissemination in mainstream media, systemic critique as a core element of creative activism and the interplay between incorporation and expropriation. Incorporation refers to the process of assimilation of resistance, when "oppositional meanings … are relentlessly incorporated into corporatized expressions of nonoppositional support for consuming specific products (Millstein and Pulos, 2015: 399). The opposite process is that of excorporation, which describes the process when activists use the logic of appropriation to carve new meaning out of the resources available. The activism put forward by the Brandalism COP21 action is explored through the relationship between environmental activism, culture jamming and visual repertoires. Through an analysis of artworks installed by the Brandalism project in Paris bus stops, I outline key repertoires of environmental action: 1) corporate greed, 2) inadequate politicians, 3) consumer saturation, 4) Earth in mourning, and 5) public commitment to the environment. The Brandalism project is a case of discursive political consumerism or culture jamming (the terms are used synonymously) which demonstrates similarities but also differences to its predecessors. Among its unique attributes is that it directly links the advertising industry to climate change and calls for a debate on the ethics of advertising as a key battlefield over

cultural meaning and environmental sustainability. First, this paper offers the theoretical trajectories of the Brandalism project as situated within the new politics of consumption, political consumerism and culture jamming. Next, it argues for the logic of appropriation in contemporary manifestations of culture jamming before it moves on to introduce the case study and analyze the visual narratives of environmental action. Finally, it evaluates the contribution of the Brandalism project as a specific form of discursive political consumerism towards environmental action.

Theoretical Trajectories of Culture Jamming: Brandalism, through the New Politics of Consumption and (Discursive) Political Consumerism

The new politics of consumption is concerned with the link between everyday consumption and environmental sustainability, but also the critical role of consumption. Sociologist Juliet Schor has articulated a convincing argument challenging 'the new consumerism' for a new politics of consumption which "should begin with daily life, and recent developments in the sphere of consumption" (2000: 448). Schor elaborates on the possibility of a new politics of consumption based on seven elements. These concern redressing structural injustice, debunking the myths of free market and consumer sovereignty, acknowledging ecological sustainability as everyday practice, holding advertising accountable and organizing a consumer movement which would pressure the state towards consumer policies in line with the new politics of consumption. In later work, Schor (2010) has proposed a model of *plentitude* for envisaging ecological sustainability. The present society of the spectacle can be redeemed, she argues, when individuals take up the principles

of plentitude[v]; by doing so, "they are pioneers of the micro (individual-level) activity that is necessary to create the macro (system-wide) equilibrium" (Schor, 2010: 3).This does not mean that consumers will save the planet, but that this will be achieved by both an alternative energy system and an alternative economy. There is resonance here, therefore, with regard to environmentalism in the new politics of consumption, as discussed above. The micro activity that Schor refers to concerns both ecologically sustainable consumption and environmental action.

Environmental concerns can become engulfed in the sphere of consumption as processes of commercialization of social change rise. Since the late 1980s, eco-labelling has been part of the mainstream marketplace, carried by numerous durable, non-toxic, organic, recycled or renewable energy products. As Seyfang (2008: 3) puts forward, the focus has shifted "from initial possibilities of redefining prosperity and wealth and radically transforming lifestyles, to a focus on … marketing 'green' or 'ethical' products such as fairly traded coffee, low-energy light bulbs, more fuel-efficient vehicles, biodegradable washing powder, and so forth". The mainstreaming of ethical consumption raises questions about its market appropriation due to corporate engagement and increasing promotional communication of the cause (Lekakis, 2013). Furthermore, there is an increasing engagement of corporate actors in environmental activism (Aronczyk, 2013). As advertising takes hold of signs, values and meaning, it can in the process evacuate environmental concerns leading to greenwashing (Goldman and Papson, 1996).

Yet, ecologically sustainable consumption is only one aspect of the version of consumer politics which political scientists Michele Micheletti and Dietlind Stolle (2015) advocate. Political consumerism for them is similar to the new politics of consumption, in that it addresses concerns about justice and sustainability and employs the marketplace to express and practice political concerns. Micheletti has argued that political consumerism

includes "action by people who make choices among producers and products with the goal of changing objectionable institutional or market practices" (2003: 2). This is then similar to the model of plentitude whereby the individual practices address the institutional level for purposes of influencing ethical (ecologically sustainable) practices. There are four types of political consumerism which engage consumer politics with the environment: buycotts, boycotts, discursive political consumerism and lifestyle politics[vi]. Ecologically sustainable consumption belongs in the first category, as the preference towards products and services which demonstrate commitment to tackling climate change, reducing their carbon emissions and circumventing rampant consumerism. On the other hand, boycotts are acts of avoidance of environmentally dubious products and services. Discursive political consumerism (or culture jamming) is different because of its use of creativity and digital media, as well as lack of material engagement with consumption (ibid: 171).

Culture jamming, through its use of "consumer culture as a viable path to social change" (Carducci, 2006: 130) is, therefore, akin to the new politics of consumption and political consumerism. Culture jamming is often linked to the legacy of the Situationist International (SI) (Kuehn, 2015). The SI (1957-1972), a Paris-based international organization of artists and intellectuals which influenced the May 1968 student and worker protests pioneered creative tactics such as the creation of *situations* as opposite to the spectacles of consumer society (Debord, 1967), the employment of *dérive* as the disruption of routines and boundaries and the practice of *détournement* (Harold, 2009); the latter refers to "the act of reusing and reassembling preexisting elements to bring forward new meanings" (Millstein and Pulos, 2015: 397). Furthermore, for Chesters and Welsh (2010: 160), it

> "involves changing the meaning of commercial logos, advertisements or political messages through cut and paste techniques that mirror the form and design of the

> original whilst reappropriating its message, a primary purpose being to disrupt the perpetuations of corporate and elitist values in public spaces."

The visual repertoires mobilized for purposes of subvertising mimic those of the targeted advertisements. The rhetorical devices are subverted messages. In examining appropriation, it is important to focus on the narratives which are challenged and changed. As Goldman and Papson (2000: 82) have suggested, "advertisements are always commodity narratives". They posit that ads discursively construct the world, subdue inequality, promote a normative vision and reflect the logic of capitalism and the society of the spectacle (ibid: 95-96). Culture jamming turns them into a "field of contestation" (Sandlin and Milam, 2008: 332).

Appropriation is also a specific logic which in the case of Brandalism is linked to the protest logics of the environmental movement. Della Porta and Diani (2006) put forward three types of protest logics (numbers, damage, witnessing). The logic of appropriation is resonant with the logic of witnessing. In his analysis of the mediation opportunity structure and protest logics, Cammaerts (2012) traces three types of interactions between media and activism (media representation, self-mediation and resistance through technology), as well as the opportunities and constraints of each in relation to the three types of protest logics. In line with opportunities that Cammaerts (2012) sets out, the Brandalism project engages in acts of self-mediation through its tactical use of media which, as will be outlined below, mock elite spectacles through acts of subversion, aim to construct collective identities against advertising and to promote sustainable lifestyles.

As is the case with most culture jamming, because they are disruptive, the acts of Brandalism are only ephemerally available in public spaces., This resonates with a point that Guy Debord (1957: n. p.) raises in the *Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action*:

> "We have to multiply poetic subjects and objects — which are now unfortunately so rare that the slightest ones take on an exaggerated emotional importance — and we have to organize games for these poetic subjects to play with these poetic objects. This is our entire program, which is essentially transitory. Our situations will be ephemeral, without a future. Passageways. Our only concern is real life; we care nothing about the permanence of art or of anything else."

The emphasis on poetics and ephemerality that SI place on their organization and actions is grounded in concerns around real life. To a certain extent, then, this quest for authenticity through street art, such the known figures of Banksy and Shepherd Fairy, that street art often aspires to but always struggles with its ambivalence (Banet-Weiser, 2012). In this sense, culture jamming can also be susceptible to the ambivalence of the society of the spectacle to which the SI responded with situations. Yet, Stephen Duncombe (2007: 126) highlights that all spectacles can be ethical and defines the progressive ethical spectacle as "one that is directly democratic, breaks down hierarchies, fosters community, allows for diversity, and engages with reality while asking what new realities might be possible". The Brandalism COP21 action created such an ethical spectacle.

Digital media can enhance culture jamming (Carducci, 2006; Mattoni and Teune, 2014; Stolle and Micheletti, 2015). They offer the possibility of archiving work which would otherwise be removed and destroyed, disseminating these messages in a theoretically limitless audience, organizing transnationally and mobilizing public interest. Similarly to the new politics of consumption, culture jamming aims to expose commodity fetishism and unethical corporate practice. Akin to the SI and concerns about the society of the spectacle, culture jammers are concerned with identity politics, media concentration, environmental degradation and the 'real life'. Since the 1980s, culture jammers have include the likes of Adbusters, Billionaires for Bush, Barbie Liberation Organization, Billboard Liberation Front,

Panda Man, Yes Men, the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination, Space Hijackers, Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping and many more, including the case in point, Brandalism.

The Logic of Appropriation

What is the driving logic of culture jamming? First, it must consider the tensions between power and resistance in dominant expressions of consumer culture and subversive forms of discursive political consumerism. *Appropriation* involves the exchanges between *incorporation* and *expropriation*. Michael Glassco (2012: 70) questions the limits of subversion where "appropriation confronts not only the ideology of advertising or the myths of commodification but also deeply entrenched structures of consumer capital that reinforce and articulate the logics of capital and interpellate subjects to reproduce the necessary conditions of production". Both in physical public spaces and in digital spaces, forms of discursive political consumerism resist and reuse the logic of appropriation. The risks of incorporation for creative forms of activism such as culture jamming have also been noted by Stolle and Micheletti (2015: 203), who suggest that discursive political consumerism "is dependent on the logic of capitalism to publicize its cause". Furthermore, Cammaerts (2012) highlights the constraints of self-mediation of the logic of appropriation by suggesting that it is inward-looking with little direct engagement with formal politics.

Yet, the logic of culture jamming manifests productively in at least two ways: first, as a modality of the new politics of consumption and second, as a modality against the commercialisation of social change. Brandalism during COP21 articulated their actions and

appropriation art for the environment and against advertising as a *cause of climate change*. Out of seven elements that Juliet Schor offers to open up the debate on the new politics of consumption, two stand out in relation to the discourses of culture jamming as analysed so far. Firstly, by obscuring or blurring the process of production, advertising fetishizes the commodity. Continuing scandals around sweatshops, as well as ongoing violations of human and labour rights in them need to be acknowledged and responded to. Brandalism critique corporate greenwashing and implicated politicians in fun subvertisements. They follow the SI's quest for 'the real life' outside the fakery of consumer culture where the logic of capitalism aims to "conjure away the real with the signs of the real" (Baudrillard, 1998: 33). While culture jamming runs the risk of incorporation, Wettergren (2009) has discussed the emotional regime of capitalism with regards to the possibility to incorporation, the fake fun of consumer culture might override the real fun of culture jamming. Yet, she also makes a crucial distinction between the two in terms of the first being about consumption, while the second being about production. Commitment to the environment is about exposing the perils of consumer culture and calling publics to engage in acts of creation instead of acts of consumption[vii].

Secondly, the omnipresence of advertising results in the commercialisation of culture and creates "a blandness in the cultural environment" (Schor, 2000: 461). This needs to be interrogated in terms of representation and regulation of our spaces. In terms of representation, diversity and difference would be positively upheld, while in terms of regulation, the aim would be to create ad-free spaces and commercial-free public education. Therefore, the cultural dimensions of advertising need to be rethought and reconfigured with the public interest in mind. Brandalism is a case which articulates a systemic critique to capitalism as usual and directly addresses advertising *as a space of contestation*. The Brandalism project cites a report produced by the Public Interest Research Centre and WWF-

UK as "a very important document for shaping our project"[viii]. Entitled *Think of Me as Evil? Opening the Ethical Debates in Advertising*, the report challenges claims about advertising being a means to redistribute consumption, a mirror of cultural values and simply concerned with the promotion of choice and argues that "modern advertising's impact on British culture is likely to be detrimental to our wellbeing, and may well exacerbate the social and environmental problems that we collectively confront" (Alexander et al, 2011: 15). The report suggests a direct link between the cultural commercial environment and the ecological environment that we inhabit. Similarly, as Schor posits, "there are fruitful and essential linkages between production, consumption and the environment that we should be making" (2000: 461). The political and environmental dimensions of advertising also deem recognition and response. Brandalism appears to be heeding to such calls and calling for a debate in the public interest.

Brandalism in COP21: Creative Disruption

> "The Brandalism project started in 2012, as an extension of the guerilla art traditions of the 20th Century, and a manifestation of various elements influenced by agitprop, the Situationists and graffiti movements. We began by merging the arts, the social and the political in the UK's largest unauthorised exhibition, taking over 36 billboards in 5 UK cities. Internationally recognised artists were involved, but on the street you wouldn't know it: all the works were unsigned and anonymously installed within public space, as gifts to society." (Posters, 2015: n. p.)

The name of the main figure behind the Brandalism project, Bill Posters, is in itself is a culture jam. A bill poster is someone who installs bills or placards on walls or billboards. 'Post no bills' or 'bill posters will be prosecuted' are signs which in the UK warn commercial vendors that advertising was not allowed in the vicinity. Bill Posters and the Brandalism project operate under that same warning; post commercial messages here and they will be disrupted. In line with the (new) politics of consumption, Posters (2015: n. p.) states: "we attempted to connect individual forms of expression with collective bigger-than-self issues". The motivations behind the Brandalism project echo the motivations of culture jammers that Naomi Klein makes reference to in terms of opening up "community discussion about the politics of public space" (2005: 128) and exposing "truth in advertising" (ibid: 286). In Mark Dery's (2010) terms, the Brandalism project engages in 'billboard banditry'. A brief history of the Brandalism project goes back to 2012 when they replaced billboards in five UK cities with artworks by over twenty eight internationally based artists to provoke "a discussion about the legitimacy of outdoor advertising spaces that we are forced to interact with"[ix]. Then in 2014, in the same spirit, three hundred and sixty five works of art were installed in advertising panels in bus stops in ten UK cities[x]. The Brandalism project targets advertising both as a practice, as well as a space. It mobilizes artists and activists.

Brandalism actions scaled up with the COP21 project, as six hundred advertising panels in bus stops were replaced with original artworks. The operation took place during Black Friday (or Vendredi Noir) and targeted Paris bus stops. In the press release of the COP21 action[xi], Joe Elan from Brandalism said:

> "We are taking their spaces back because we want to challenge the role advertising plays in promoting unsustainable consumerism. Because the advertising industry force feeds our desires for products created from fossil fuels, they are intimately connected to causing climate change. As is the case with the Climate talks and their

> corporate sponsored events, outdoor advertising ensures that those with the most amount of money are able to ensure that their voices get heard above all else."

The action was directed against corporate sponsorship of COP21, which included BMW, The Coca-Cola Company, Moody's Corporation, and Dow Chemicals[xii]. A study by Observatoire des Multinationales and LeBasic[xiii] revealed that only one out of the ten largest corporate sponsors of the COP21[xiv] is underway to meet the CO2 reduction targets set by the Europe Union. It also provided evidence of the bought and paid for publicity that helped the rest of the sponsors to conceal their actual emissions record. Greenwashing of the climate talks became a key area of focus for the Brandalism project and which they are not an environmental social movement, they belong in the broader genre of creative activism. The latter refers to activist initiatives which make tactical use of digital media, are process rather than result-oriented and often operate on the basis of projects (Harrebye, 2015).

The actions of Brandalism project are similar, but also different to individualized responsibility taking (Stolle and Micheletti, 2015). On the one hand, engaging in an act of Brandalism does not require formal membership, as it was volunteers who installed the posters in Paris bus stops (Dekeyser, 2015). Also, the Brandalism project during COP21 involved multiple targets, ranging from corporations to multiple states and their citizens. The internet provided tactical archival and dissemination services. However, unlike individualized responsibility taking, this type of culture jamming is not practiced by citizens in everyday settings. The activities of Brandalism project are borderline illicit and while conducted in public spaces like bus stops, they disrupt ‘normal’ codes of conduct. Clad in high visibility jackets and armed with a £6 kit to bust ad space[xv], friends of the Brandalism project took to the streets of Paris during the night of Black Friday to install their preferred versions for bus stop advertisements. Furthermore, their actions are not practiced individually, but include a broad network of international artists. Eighty two artists based in nineteen countries partook

to the creation of artworks for purposes of the Brandalism project at the COP21[xvi]. Indeed, as discussed above, since they share the quest for 'real life' it is unsurprising that several creators come from the world of street art, such as Paul Insect who is cited in a Banksy biography[xvii]. Finally, significantly, it takes two people to put up a six sheet poster in a bus stop. This is not enacted individually, but at least in pairs. The collaboration between a London-based collective and international artists resulted in the appropriation of Paris bus stops.

The project's Twitter account[xviii], as well as their website[xix] both document extensive news coverage ranging from street art online magazines to the mainstream news organisations.. Sympathetic reporting on behalf of several global news outlets can be observed through their titles, as listed in the Brandalism website[xx]. The *World Post* reported 'World Leaders Bombarded by Art Protest at Paris Climate Talks'[xxi]. The *BBC* called it an 'ad takeover' by 'eco activists Brandalism'[xxii], while *MTV News* suggested the Brandalism action was 'a guerilla art group's great takeover of corporate sponsors'[xxiii]. *Libération*'s title is that an artist collective is engaged in *détournement* to declare the 'schizophrenia' of COP21 corporate sponsors[xxiv]. Such titles increased the visibility of the spatially ephemeral action. There were also, however, news outlets which reported the sighting of 'fake' advertising or publicity in the streets of Paris (e.g. *Ad Week, Business Insider, CBC, La Repubblica*) in what might be regarded as an attempt to incorporate the ethical spectacle of Brandalism into the corporate society of the spectacle. Despite its broadcasting, the Brandalism project in COP21 did not gauge any responses from the corporations it targeted[xxv]. Yet, a year following the action, Communication Sans Frontiers, a Paris-based NGO focused on ethical communications, presented Brandalism with the 'Activist of the Year' award for the COP21 action[xxvi]. The effectiveness, thus, of Brandalism can be attributed to their tactical media use and their commitment to ethical communication.

Methodology

Textual analysis (McKee, 2003) is utilized to explore how culture jamming resists and reuses the logic of appropriation through the symbolic repertoires of the Brandalism COP21 action . This paper also aims to further an understanding of the role of images in forms of creative activism (Mattoni and Teune, 2014). Out of 122 original artworks[xxvii], a sample of twelve was selected. The sample was purposive in that it was chosen to reflect the targets of the campaign (corporations, politicians, citizens) as well as creative tactics: sabotage, appropriation and intensification or augmentation (Harold, 2009). Sabotage is concerned with the attempt to disrupt the profit motive of late capitalism. Appropriation engages this logic in symbolic battle. Augmentation blows up its elements. Most of the most reproduced images in news reporting of the Brandalism COP21 action are included in this sample. The themes emerged reflectively between the time of sampling, analysis and interpretation. The analysis was consistent with the commitment of the Brandalism project to expose corporate sponsorship and sound the alarm of rampant consumerism.

The interpretation is also underscored by a commitment to the critical theory of cultural theorist Jim McGuigan (2009) whose theory of 'cool capitalism' suggests that capitalism feeds off its critique and constantly develops innovative ways to envelop cultural criticism. Giving the example of Apple, he suggests that there is a back region to the cool front of branded commodities and corporations (McGuigan, 2012). It is this back region that the Brandalism project aims to illuminate. In fact several of the artworks directly engaged with mobile phones as a device of distraction and environmental devolution. The discourses of the Brandalism COP21 action invited publics to decipher a puzzle. Sometimes the message is crystal clear, other times not; sometimes it targets corporations, and sometimes it portrays a

post-apocalyptic near future. Almost all of the times it subverts advertisements and disrupts the corporate spectacle.

Environmental Discourse of Brandalism during COP21

The environmental discourse of the Brandalism project during COP21 might have been fueled by the desire to override the greenwashing of the climate talks, but it is not a one-dimensional campaign. It used multiple rhetorical devices to disrupt everyday settings. Rhetorical devices are defined here as symbolic repertoires which aim to destabilize the corporate messages in public spaces and, in this case, bought and paid for by the corporate sponsors of the COP21 climate talks.

Environmentalism has been a key concern of culture jamming (Lasn, 2000; Carducci, 2006). More recently, specific studies have emerged, such as those exploring the prophetic environmental discourse of Reverend Billy (Kaylor, 2013) or the Greenpeace campaign in collaborationwith the Yes Men (Davis et al, 2016). This article focuses on the environmental discourse of the Brandalism COP21 action as a renewed manifestation of culture jamming, demonstrating directed commitment to addressing climate change in survivalist urgency and facing the risks of operating under a highly militarized protest context and the state of emergency in France during the climate talks.

There are five rhetorical devices in the culture jams of Brandalism during COP21: 1) *corporate greed*, 2) *inadequate politicians*, 3) *consumer saturation*, 4) *Earth in mourning* and 5) *commitment to the environment*. The twelve posters discussed below are original works of art which resonate with the new politics of consumption (Schor, 2000). The first three types

describe different aspects of the climate problem or, in other words, the different stages through which capitalism operates against the environment. The fourth type illustrates the amplified reactions of the planet due to climate change. Finally, the fifth offers visions of both an open and a prescribed lifestyle politics (Stolle and Micheletti, 2015) that can demonstrate a lasting commitment to the environment.

Corporate Greed

In response to the corporate sponsorship of COP21, artists designed works in response to climate change. Many chose to appropriate the promotional communication of some of the major COP21 sponsors. One of the most circulated artworks created by Revolt Design features an appropriated Air France advertisement with an air stewardess holding a finger up to her lips urging the viewer to silence[xxviii]. The main title reads '*Tackling Climate Change*?' in capital letters, while the subheading responds, also in capitals, '*Of course not. We're an airline*'. The copy below explains: '*We're sponsoring the climate conference so we look like we're part of the solution and to make sure our profits aren't affected'*. The secretive and scheming message of the subvertisement is part of its pranking rhetoric (Harold, 2004). Below the conspiring air stewardess, more text reads: '*economic growth is far more important than saving the planet. So we'll keep on bribing politicians and emitting greenhouse gases. Just keep it to yourself*'. Finally, the logo of Air France is followed by the slogan '*part of the problem*' and a hashtag '*#redlines*'[xxix]. As a subvertisement of Air France, this artwork engages in the tactic of appropriation rather than sabotage or augmentation. It

highlights the unlikely commitment of the company to environmentalism. Hence, it also augments a critique of greenwashing.

In a Mobil subvertisement by Barnbook, Klink & Friends[xxx], upon an image of offshore oil drilling, the text '*Nous connaissons tres bien l'impact des energies fossiles sur l'environment mais l'avons toujours nie publiquement'* (we knew about the impact of fossil fuels but publicly denied it) is pasted. The corporate logo is followed by the same hashtag '*#redlines*', '*#D12*[xxxi]' and '*#ClimateGames*'. The reference to such protest events illustrates the networked environmental activism in which the Brandalism project partakes. Here too, culture jamming takes a confessional note in its exposé of corporate greed and offer a more 'real' approach to corporate speech and spectacle. This artwork also portrays the corporate activities which are destructive towards the environment.

Inadequate Politicians

The role of politicians is also highlighted. Bill Posters designed three artworks featuring politicians in compromized positions[xxxii]. One of them features the British Conservative MP and then Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osbourne being fed petrol which fuels a series of smokestacks which are situated on his head in a Mohawk hairstyle[xxxiii]. The latter detail is also an ironic reference to the Diesel brand whose iconic logo is a man with a Mohawk hairstyle, a pose copied in the Osbourne artwork. In the top left corner, the logo of the COP21 can be found. The fuel hose out of which Osbourne is drinking oil is adorned with the names of corporations such as British Gas, EDF, RWE and Centrica, thereby making a direct link between corporate sponsorship and politicians' actions.

Another artwork by Eubé and KC featured the President of France Francois Hollande in a collage of catastrophe[xxxiv]. There are three visuals of a staring Hollande, a tall forest scene and a cut forest scene, laid out vertically and separated by a news ticker rolling out '*etat d'urgence*' (state of emergency). The reference of the text here is made to the French state's response to the Paris attacks which preceded the COP21 in mid-November 2015. In this piece, the concept of emergency is appropriated from the threat of terrorism to environmental threat. The French state called for a state of emergency ban on demonstrations after the Paris attacks, despite which the D12 red lines protest took place. The message in the artwork here suggests that the French state should demonstrate the same commitment to tackling climate change as it did to counter terrorism.

Consumer Saturation

In contemporary consumer societies, the spectacle can usually be found in the sleek and shiny mobile phone screen. An artwork by Sam3 pictures the shadow of a man/ostrich creature holding a phone close to their human face while planting their ostrich head deep in the ground[xxxv]. This artwork is different to the rest as it does not sabotage, appropriate or augment. Instead, it offers a dystopian vision according to which consumers are glued to the screen of the spectacle while knowingly ignoring the environmental emergency. Another piece of appropriation art with a similar theme is created by Kai Giuseppin who offers a subvertisement to Apple's iPhone[xxxvi]. The pictured iPhone is crowned but bleeding from the top while the copy reads '*the king is dead*' in capitals and below it '*designed to become obsolete within two years*'. This echoes McGuigan (2012: 433) who suggested that "such

'cool' gadgets as the iPod, iPhone and iPad, useful as they undoubtedly are, nevertheless, exemplify the process of commodity fetishism and the obscuring of neoliberal capitalism's system of global exploitation". Furthermore, as Schor (2010: 47-48) underscores in *Plentitude*,

> "it is important to recognize that consumers have been cut off from the material realities of production. Producers and retailers prefer that consumers not think about the damage their purchases are having on the earth, so information is not typically available, especially at the point of purchase. Does the factory that assembled the cell phone rely on dirty, coal-fired electricity?"

While the artworks do not attempt to decommodify the iPhone or mobile phone in question, they point to the routine consumer spectacle that distracts, pacifies and reproduces the capitalist system.

Another artwork by Ben Parry features simply a handwritten conjugation of the verb consommér (to consume) followed by '*et la terre mourra en hurlant*' (and the Earth will die screaming)[xxxvii]. There is subversion here, rather than appropriation, as the routine of the society of the spectacle is represented in the 'I consume, you consume, he/she consumes, we consume, you consume, they consume' while the disruption comes as the nature outcome of the repeated cycle of rampant consumerism. It is here that "the liberation of desire from corporate control, or put differently, *reclaiming control over the means of providing pleasure*, becomes a critical point of resistance" (Wettergren, 2009: 5). Brandalism is subverting the pleasures of consumer culture to link to the pains of environmental degradation. The link between consumerism and the environment is strongly scrutinized here, leading to the next theme in the environmental discourses of Brandalism during COP21.

Earth in Mourning

Several artworks warned of the environmental apocalypse. An artwork by Millo featured two gigantic doctor figures using an equally gigantic thermometer to take the temperature of an urban landscape[xxxviii]. This is mostly black and white with red in the temperature sensor and in the cross in the doctors' outfits. It is also a warning, that the symptom is temperature rising but the cause is deeper. A similar approach can be seen in a piece by Kennard Phillips, where people appear to be walking away from us through a vast garbage-filled landscape[xxxix]. If one pays more attention to this image, the shopping bags can be seen in the hands of the human figures. The link between consumer saturation and environmental degradation is made forcefully clear. In an artwork by Paul Insect that also disrupts the scale of things in relation to one another, a pleading Earth is beckoning salvation while rested in a human hand[xl]. The vision of a helpless planet and its ecosystem is also geared towards inducing public grieving which can be regarded as "a revolutionary act designed to criticize and energize" (Kaylor, 2013: 404);

This type of environmental discourse is different to the rest in terms of the rhetorical intervention (Harold, 2009), as well as the 'emotional energy' (Wettergren, 2009) that it puts forward. Instead of appropriation, these pieces employ augmentation to underscore the urgency of climate change. Artworks featuring a shrunken cityscape or a miniature version of the Earth call upon citizens to make the environment a priority. The exaggerated garbage land is a reminder of some of the consequences of unsustainable consumption. Furthermore, in all three pieces, there is a sense of near-loss and of mourning. The images are not funny or ironic, but rather sad and grieving. This bleak augmented near future can potentially be

reversed by a different type of discourse; as Kaylor (2013: 406) similarly notes in the case of Reverend Billy against JP Morgan, "such parody mixed with public grief is exactly what is needed to shed light on the absurd reality and spark a new, hopeful mindset that can lead to creating a new reality". The new reality needs to include a serious commitment to the environment.

Public Commitment to the Environment

Two different artworks demonstrate two visions of expressing and practicing commitment to the environment for the public. An artwork by Parisians carries a handwritten poem composed of words of various sizes[xli]:

> '*To the children I may never have, my species and my planet. I care. I will not stand by as you are harmed. You are my duty, my joy, my responsibility and it is my honour to protect and love you. Yours. Always.*'

This poem is a declaration of love and commitment. As such, this artwork has the potential to create a "political poetics" (Sandlin and Milam, 2008: 338) which is key to critical public pedagogy. As mentioned earlier, this is what the SI was egging on; the multiplication of poetic subjects and objects. There is no prescribed vision of how an individual should engage with environmental activism, but there is a sense of long-standing commitment necessary to protect the environment. This poetic call to the public to exhibit a commitment to environmentalism also aims to project a more 'real' voice, that of any one of us who might or might not have children and who inhabits this planet.

Another poetic yet more suggestive artwork is the raised fist of poetry by GILF[xlii]. This features a series of commands for a happier and more sustainable lifestyle. Similar to principles of plentitude (Schor, 2010), the poem calls for an alternative allocation of time, DIY and self-provision, sustainable consumption and restored value in interpersonal relations and community exchanges:

> '*Love. Disobey. Sing. Unionize. Celebrate. Tolerate. Dance, Organise. Divest. Offer. Sympathize. Welcome. Act. Wake up. Respond. Empathize. Do with less. Appreciate. Be joyful. Plan. Find common ground. See beauty in others. Be accepting. Honor all life. Make art. Eat real food. Plant a garden. Teach. Show compassion. Be charitable. Exude grace. Choose equality. Meditate. Give love. Leave the world a better place. Be honorable. Choose to make a difference. Achieve. Pursue your dreams. Work through differences peacefully. Create a collective. Express unity. March. Support one another. Gift. Create. Protest. Find commonality. Come together. Make progress. Exude happiness. Develop community. Help others. Give more. Consume less. Work together. Honor the elderly. Volunteer. Exude happiness. Choose love. Be present. Feed the homeless. Be grateful for now. Be kind to strangers. Stand up. Create peace. Honor love of all kinds. Smile at strangers. Try harder. Breathe. Say thank you.'*

This poem is a declaration of a committed politics of love, community and social justice. It also beckons a rethinking of everyday life in line with the new politics of consumption. As rhetorical interventions to the usual advertisements in bus stops, both images use sabotage. They break the spectacle of advertisements in public spaces and offer their own vision of environmentalism in the public interest.

Conclusion

Creative forms of activism such as culture jamming or discursive political consumerism present new possibilities for a progressive politics and mobilize artists, activists and volunteers for causes such as environmentalism. During the COP21, under the state of emergency ban on protests, artists and activists replaced the advertising panels of six hundred bus stops in Paris with their own messages. Environmental discourses of Brandalism relied on the subversion, appropriation and augmentation of artworks in advertising panels of public bus stops in Paris and later digital media channels to communicate alternatives visions of corporate and political greed, rampant consumerism as well as evoke public mourning about the environment and call for an individualized collective commitment to the environment.

The Brandalism project is an attempt to remedy previous symbolic forms of contention and testifies to Klein's suggestion that "adbusting is not an end in itself. It is simply a tool –one of many- that is being used, loaned and borrowed in a much broader political movement against the branded life" (2005: 309). They use the logic and space of dominant commercial discourses to disrupt and recreate them. Yet, they go beyond critiques of culture jamming in the sense that they enhance the logic of appropriation by working in collaboration with activist and social movements (supporting the #D12 protests), articulating a systemic critique of capitalism that addresses advertising as a both its symptom and cause (through their critique of politicians, corporations and consumer culture) and by linking that critique to climate change.

The logic of appropriation is informed by a dialectical relationship with the public interest. It highlights a tensional relationship between the logic of capitalism between incorporation and expropriation. In line with the new politics of consumption, it signals a distance from capitalism as usual by renewing the cultural environment of dominant commercial discourse, while it resists commodity fetishism by underlining its consequences and upholds community-facing values rather than individual consumerist values. Furthermore, the Brandalism project draws a strong link between the advertising industry as an industry of perpetuating rampant consumerism and its environmental consequences. The cultural and environmental aspects of this type of creative activism productively intersect. The Brandalism project demonstrates how a spectacle can be ethical, how the politics of environmentalism can benefit from creative tactics and how activists and artists are increasingly implicated in contemporary social change.

Bibliography

Alexander, J., Crompton, T. and Shrubsole, G. (2011) *Think of Me as Evil? Opening the Ethical Debates in Advertising*, Report produced by Public Interest Research Centre (PIRC) and WWF-UK. Available: http://www.wwf.org.uk/wwf_articles.cfm?unewsid=5374 [16 March 2016].

Aronczyk, M. (2013). Market(ing) Activism: Lush Cosmetics, Ethical Oil, and the Self-Mediation of Protest, *JOMEC (Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies Journal)*. 4: 1-21.

Baudrillard, J. (1998). *The Consumer Society*. London: Sage.

Cammaerts, B. (2007). Jamming the Political: Beyond Counter-hegemonic Practices. *Continuum*, 21(1), 71-90.

Cammaerts, B. (2012). Protest Logics and the Mediation Opportunity Structure. *European Journal of Communication*. 27(2), 117–134.

Carducci, V. (2006). Culture Jamming: A Sociological Perspective. *Journal of Consumer Culture*. 6(1), 116-38.

Chesters, G. and Welsh, I. (2010). *Social Movements: The Key Concepts*. London: Routledge.

Davis, C. B., Glantz, M. and Novak, D. R. (2016). "You Can't Run Your SUV on Cute. Let's Go!" Internet Memes as Delegitimizing Discourse. *Environmental Communication*, 10(1), 62-83.

Debord, G. (1957). Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action. Available: http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/report.html [16 February 2016].

Debord, G. ([1967] 1994). *Society of the Spectacle*. translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, New York: Zone Books.

Dekeyser, T. (2015). Why artists installed 600 fake adverts at COP21. *The Conversation*. December 7. Available: https://theconversation.com/why-artists-installed-600-fake-adverts-at-cop21-51925 [12 January 2016].

Della Porta, D. and Diani, M. (2006). *Social Movements: An Introduction*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Dery, M. ([1993] 2010). Culture Jamming: Hacking, Slashing, and Sniping in the Empire of Signs. Open Magazine pamphlet. Available: http://markdery.com/?page_id=154 [27 February 2016].

Duncombe, S. (2007). *Dream: Re-imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy*, New York and London: The New Press.

Elgin, D. (1981). *Voluntary Simplicity*: *Toward a Way of Life that is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich*. New York: Harper Collins.

Ellsworth-Jones, W. (2013). *Banksy: The Man behind the Wall*. London: Aurum.

Glassco, M. (2012). *Contested Images: The Politics and Poetics of Appropriation*. PhD Thesis, University of Iowa. Available: http://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/2875 [24 January 2016].

Goldman, R. and Papson, S. (2000 [1996]). Advertising in the Age of Accelerated Meaning. In J. B. Schor and D. B. Holt (eds) *The Consumer Society Reader* (pp. 81-98), New York: The New Press.

Harold, C. (2004). Pranking Rhetoric: "culture jamming" as media activism. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 21(3), 189-211.

Harold, C. (2009). *OurSpace: Resisting the Corporate Control of Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Harrebye, S. (2015). The ambivalence of creative activism as a reorganization of critique. *Culture and Organization*. 21(2), 126-146.

Heath, J. and Potter, A. (2005). *The Rebel Sell: How the Counterculture Became Consumer Culture*. West Sussex, England: Capstone.

Jordan, T. (2002). *Activism! Direct Action, Hacktivism and the Future of Society*. London: Reaktion Books.

Kaylor, B. (2013). Earth-a-lujah! The Prophetic Environmental Discourse of Reverent Billy. *Environmental Communication*. 7(3), 391-408.

Klein, N. (2005). *No Logo.* London: Flamingo.

Kuehn, K. (2015). Culture Jamming. In Daniel Thomas Cook and J. Michael Ryan (eds.) *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Consumption and Consumer Studies* (pp. 226-228), Wiley-Blackwell.

Lasn, K. (2000). *Culture Jam: How to Reverse American's Suicidal Consumer Binge - and why we must*. New York: Quill.

Lekakis, E. (2013). *Coffee Activism and the Politics of Fair Trade and Ethical Consumption in the Global North*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Mattoni, A. and Teune (2014). Visions of Protest: A Media-Historic Perspective on Images in Social Movements. *Sociology Compass*. 8(6), 876-887.

McGuigan, J. (2009). *Cool Capitalism*. London: Pluto.

McGuigan, J. (2012). The Coolness of Capitalism Today. *Triple C – Cognition Communication Co-Operation*. 10(2), 425-438.

McKee, A. (2003). *Textual analysis*. London: Sage.

Micheletti, M. (2003). *Political Virtue and Shopping: Individuals, Consumerism and Collective Action*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Posters, B. (2015). Advertising Shits in Your Head. *Strike!* February 20th. Available: http://strikemag.org/advertising-shits-in-your-head/ [18 February 2016].

Sandlin, J. A. and Milam, J. L. (2008). "Mixing Pop (Culture) and Politics": Cultural Resistance, Culture Jamming, and Anti-Consumption Activism as Critical Public Pedagogy. *Curriculum Inquiry*. 38(3), 323-350.

Schor, J. B. (2000 [1999]). Towards a New Politics of Consumption. In J. B. Schor and D. B. Holt (eds) *The Consumer Society Reader* (pp. 446-462). New York: The New Press.

Schor, J. B. (2010). *Plentitude: The New Economics of True Wealth*. New York: Penguin.

Seyfang, G. (2008). *The New Economics of Sustainable Consumption*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Stolle, D. and Micheletti, M. (2015). *Political Consumerism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Smith-Anthony, A. and Groom, J. (2015). Brandalism and subvertising: hoisting brands with their own petard? *Journal of Intellectual Property Law & Practice*, 10(1), 29-34.

Wettergren, A. (2009). Fun and Laughter: Culture Jamming and the Emotional Regime of Late Capitalism. *Social Movement Studies*. 8(1), 1–15.

[i] http://www.brandalism.org.uk [March 20 2016].
[ii] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/artists [March 18 2016].
[iii] Culture jamming is "an attempt to reverse and transgress the meaning of cultural codes whose primary aim is to persuade us to buy something or be someone" (Jordan, 2002: 102).
[iv] Beyond buycotts (ecologically sustainable consumption), there are also boycotts (of environmentally damaging companies), discursive political consumerism (creative forms of environmental activism), as well as lifestyle politics (dedication to sustainable lifestyles).
[v] These are: 1) new allocation of time, 2) DIY and self-provision, 3) "true materialism" as an environmentally aware approach to consumption and 4) the restoration of value in interpersonal and community exchanges.
[vi] Lifestyle politics includes commitments to alternative lifestyles such as vegetarianism, veganism or voluntary simplicity. The term is derived from Duane Elgin's (1981) book with the same title in which he advocates modest consumer habits, a sense of environmental urgency, sustainable spaces and meaningful community lives.
[vii] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/artists/gilf?photo_id=565a1774920f470006000010 [March 21 2016].
[viii] Personal correspondence.
[ix] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/project2012 [18 March 2016].
[x] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/project2014 [18 March 2016].
[xi] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/brandalism-cop21 [18 March 2016].
[xii] http://www.cop21paris.org/sponsors-and-partners/sponsors [15 March 2016].
[xiii] LeBasic is the Bureau for the Appraisal of Societal Impacts for Citizen Information. The study can be found here: http://multinationales.org/IMG/pdf/lebasic_cop21_20151201.pdf [March 22 2016].

[xiv] These are Accor, BNP Paribas, Carrefour, EDF, Engie (former GDF Suez), Kering, L'Oréal, LVMH, Michelin and Renault.
[xv] http://strikemag.bigcartel.com/product/ad-space-hack-pack [18 March 2016].
[xvi] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/brandalism-cop21 and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4WnZAUOIxI [18 March 2016].
[xvii] In an unofficial biography of Banksy, Ellsworth-Jones (2013:104) writes: "if you are in the street art world you know who Swoon, Faile, Fairey, Vhils, Inkie, ESPO, Blu, Mode2, Paul Insect and many, many others are".
[xviii] https://twitter.com/BrandalismUK [18 March 2016].
[xix] http://www.brandalism.org.uk [18 March 2016].
[xx] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/press [18 March 2016]. The press material was gathered between November 2015-January 2016, as Brandalism mentioned in personal correspondence with the author.
[xxi] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/paris-climate-talks-artist-protests-corporations_us_565c5769e4b072e9d1c25108 [18 November 2016].
[xxii] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34958282 [17 November 2016].
[xxiii] http://www.mtv.com/news/2616797/guerrilla-art-brandalism-paris-climate-change-sponsors-ads/
[xxiv] http://next.liberation.fr/culture-next/2015/11/30/cop21-un-collectif-d-artistes-detourne-600-affiches-publicitaires-pour-denoncer-la-schizophrenie-des_1417212
[xxv] In personal correspondence with Brandalism, they highlight that "their strategy is very in keeping with the suggestions and advice in this law paper" (Smith-Anthony and Groom, 2015).
[xxvi] http://www.communicationsansfrontieres.org/grand-prix-communication-solidaire/10eme-grand-prix-de-communication-solidaire-2/ [November 18 2016].
[xxvii] These are available through www.brandalism.org.uk/artists/ [17 November 2016].
[xxviii] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/artists/revolt-design?photo_id=5659b4f4df6abc000e000073 [March 21 2016].
[xxix] Red Lines is the theme of the climate demonstration backed by 350.org, Attac France, Reclaim the Power, Climate Justice Action, Global Justice Now and Climate Games among others.
[xxx] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/artists/barnbrook?photo_id=565b5a52ed0e8c000e000017 [March 21 2016].
[xxxi] D12 stands for December 12, the day of the climate demonstration (http://d12.paris/).
[xxxii] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/artists/bill-posters [March 21 2016].
[xxxiii] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/artists/bill-posters?photo_id=56599658df6abc000e00003d [March 21 2016].
[xxxiv] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/artists/eube?photo_id=5659a0e1df6abc000e00004a [March 21 2016].
[xxxv] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/artists/sam3?photo_id=5659a5c4df6abc0006000047 [March 21 2016].
[xxxvi] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/artists/kai-giuseppin?photo_id=565ca9d272b01b0006000030 [March 21 2016].
[xxxvii] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/artists/ben-parry?photo_id=565992c6df6abc0006000027 [March 21 2016].
[xxxviii] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/artists/millo?photo_id=5659ccc69bdfca000b000009 [March 21 2016].
[xxxix] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/artists/kennard-phillips?photo_id=5659b7dbdf6abc0016000093 [March 21 2016].
[xl] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/artists/paul-ins?photo_id=565b6085ed0e8c000600002b [March 21 2016].
[xli] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/artists/parisians?photo_id=565a1994920f470006000011 [March 21 2016].
[xlii] http://www.brandalism.org.uk/artists/gilf?photo_id=565a1774920f470006000010 [March 21 2016].